

Annandale Observer Ltd  
IPSO Annual Statement for 2018  
About DNG Media

DNG Media is an independent publisher based in Dumfries and Galloway with four weekly newspapers, a website and a range of specialist publications.

The paid for print titles are the Annandale Herald, the Moffat News and the Annandale Observer.

There is also the Dumfries Courier, a free newspaper which is distributed through pick up points.

General news, sports and features are the mainstay of the titles and the newspapers are focused on community life in their local areas.

Editorially, the papers takes an independent political stance and ensures all the political parties and local representatives are included regularly.

The circulation area covers over half of Dumfries and Galloway and also includes parts of north Cumbria and the Scottish Borders.

However, the main focus is on eastern Dumfries and Galloway, around the towns of Dumfries, Annan, Lockerbie, Lochmaben and Langholm and their rural hinterlands.

All four newspapers date from the 19th century and have a large readership of varied ages. Along with the website, they are very much a point of reference in the communities they serve.

DNG24 is the website and it specialises in carrying the main stories and breaking news from around the whole region. There are also sports sections, features, weather and travel information. It transcends the circulation area of the print titles, extending out to Stranraer in the far west of the county.

All the content, for the print titles and website, is created and edited at our headquarters in Annan by the newsroom team, comprising the editor, associate editor, chief reporter and staff reporters. There is a staff photographer but freelancers are also used for pictures and some copy, namely farming and courts. Readers also submit some content, reports, columns and letters.

In terms of DNG Media's IPSO membership, the responsible person is Peter Laidlaw, managing director.

## **Editorial Standards**

During 2018 there was a change in editor and some movement within the structure of the newsroom team.

The new editor, Fiona Reid, has worked for the company since 2000 and was promoted from her previous deputy position.

As such, she is well acquainted with the company's policies, procedures and standards and the change of editor has thus been a smooth process.

All but one of the editorial team live in the circulation area and are in daily contact with readers, who are encouraged to call into our high street office and contact us via social media, the phone and online.

The news team value feedback - both positive and negative - and it helps to reinforce editorial standards.

We have high readership levels for our titles and take our reporting responsibilities seriously, with several levels of proofreading and fact checking in place.

Our aim is to be fair and balanced in what we publish and to satisfy the demand for local news and to provide an effective local advertising service.

We were delighted that the Annandale Herald newspaper was shortlisted for the 2018 Weekly Newspaper of the Year Award at the Scottish Newspaper Society Awards.

The Editors' Code of Practice is on display in several places in the newsroom and is regularly referred to and consulted- and updated when applicable. It is also the subject of a module taught to the trainee journalists by our trainer, Charles Fletcher.

We also take ongoing professional advice on the latest legal developments impacting on the media.

When contentious stories arise, we seek to verify facts from various sources, including our own legal consultants, and, on occasion, we have used IPSO's own pre-publication guidance service as well for advice.

During 2018, we contacted the IPSO service in relation to a deceased child and to discuss the finer points of the case. The incident was found to be non-suspicious and did not result in publication, but IPSO's advice was useful in that instance.

Overall in the course of the year we received a low number of complaints relating to our content and most of those were minor factual errors which were dealt with by corrections or clarification statements in the next edition.

We believe this low level of complaints can be attributed our high editorial standards and thorough procedures.

With regards, our policies relating to transparency regarding financial relationships or conflicts of interest: as a company it is our policy not to make payments for any news stories or leads to the general public. We do, however, make regular use of freelance journalists, photographers and occasional columnists. In addition, our journalists' employment contracts contain the firm's Anti Bribery Policy.

## **Complaints Handling**

Our policy is to correct factual errors at the earliest opportunity in a bid to maintain trust with our readers.

Individuals also have a right of reply through our letters page.

Minor factual mistakes are usually dealt with by the reporter concerned, who types up the required text and flags it up to a senior member of the editorial staff to ensure it's reviewed and placed appropriately.

More serious complaints go straight to the editor or her deputy for consideration. They are immediately logged and fact checked, then a memo is drawn up for our records. We keep in touch with the complainant with updates on our findings/assessment and if a correction is required then we agree a form of words with them.

A summary of our complaints policy and contact details for IPSO and ourselves appear in all our newspapers and on our website.

DNG Media takes complaints about our titles seriously and we are committed to abiding by IPSO rules and regulations and the Editors' Code of Practice.

## **Complaints Policy**

1. This policy relates to all complaints made against the Editors' Code of Practice administered by IPSO.
2. DNG Media aims to handle all complaints as efficiently and effectively as possible.
3. All complaints will be acknowledged within five working days.
4. If we receive multiple complaints about the same issue, we may make one response to all.
5. We may request further information from you in order to investigate your complaint.
6. We will seek to resolve the complaint once all the details have been established to your satisfaction within 28 days where appropriate. If we fail to resolve this to your satisfaction then you may refer the matter to IPSO.
7. If we feel that we cannot take your complaint forward because we do not believe it has raised a complaint against the Editor's Code, we will let you know.
8. You can see a copy of the Editor's Code here - [web link](#)
9. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint you can contact IPSO here - [web link](#)
10. If at any stage we do not hear back from you within a 28 day period, we will consider your complaint to be resolved.

## **Training Process**

The editorial team comprises senior journalists with lengthy and varied experience and several trainees. The newspaper group has a long association with the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) and trainees are required to achieve their accreditation/qualifications.

Our trainees learn through a mix of on the job experience, in house training with professional tutors, courses and distance learning.

There is ongoing internal discussion and training updates in law and legislation which could impact our work.

### **Record of compliance**

In 2018, DNG Media logged six complaints.

Most were resolved satisfactorily through discussion and explanation and the rest related to inaccuracies which were corrected in subsequent editions.

There were no complaints relating to our newspapers or website submitted to IPSO for independent adjudication.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Laidlaw". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

PETER LAIDLAW  
IPSO RESPONSIBLE PERSON  
DNG MEDIA